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Skopje (EPISCOPIÆ IUSTINIANA PRIMA) - Episcopal Metropolis of Macedonia in the Old and Middle Ages

sir Arthur J. Evans revisited

Skopje, Macedonia 2015

Macedonian Rightfaithful Church – Ohrid Archiepiscopacy

Macedonia is homeland of one of the oldest churches in the world – Ohrid Archiepiscopacy (i.e. Patriarchate), successor of *Justiniana Prima*, the third ever officially enthroned autocephalous church in the world, descended in today modern Macedonian Righfaithful Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy (MPC-OA). The Macedonian Rightfaithful Church (Makedonska Pravoverna Crkva) by succession is one of the first four Ancestral Apostolic churches.[1] The bible testifies that Macedonia was the place where it was baptised the first ever christian on European soil – Lidia from *Philipi*. In the Macedonian Jerusalem, Ohrid, was founded the first ever known Christian church on European soil in the 3rd century AD, and is the ultimate Holy See of the old Ohrid Patriarchate Archiepiscopacy. There is also the honorable platea of the first known university in Europe - St. Clement's University of Plaoshnik. Ohrid Patriarchate Archiepiscopacy from 1019 until 1766 found itself subdued under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Thenceforth, in 1767, it was uncanonically forbidden by the Turkish occupation authorities, and has passed the following few decades in illegality. It was officially restored as of 1859, by nomination of Partenie Zografski (1820-1876) for Kukush-Poljanski bishop/episcope. This was the first triumph of the renewed indigenous Macedonian Rightfaithful Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy in modern times. In the past Macedonian Rightfaithful Church - Ohrid Archiepiscopacy had under its jurisdiction as much as 32 eparchies. But lets turn back in the ancient times to the very beginning of the story...

After 4 long Macedonian-Roman Wars, after nearly two centuries long struggle and strategic battles, defeats and victories, in 148 B.C.E. Macedonia was finally defeated by Rome, and large number of Macedonians, together with their king Persei and immense plundered treasure, were taken as prisoners of war to Rome and other parts of the Roman empire. Furthermore, the Romans divided Macedonia in four, and (by sword and flame) forced from Macedonia across the Danube and Bosphorus an estimated 300.000 Macedonians, in order to prevent the possibility of Macedonian people to reenact the claim on their empire as it was during the reign of Filip and Alexander. What was left of the European part of Macedonian empire was divided once again into several parts. Skopje, or *Skopis* (lat. *Scopis/Σκοπίς/Scupi*, as the city was noted back then in the colloquial Latin language of the Roman Empire)[2], as one of the greatest settlements was also separated from the Macedonian region of *Agriania* (in Upper Macedonia). But the city of Skopje was actually made a Roman Colony much later, in the time of emperor Hadrian (AD 117–138).

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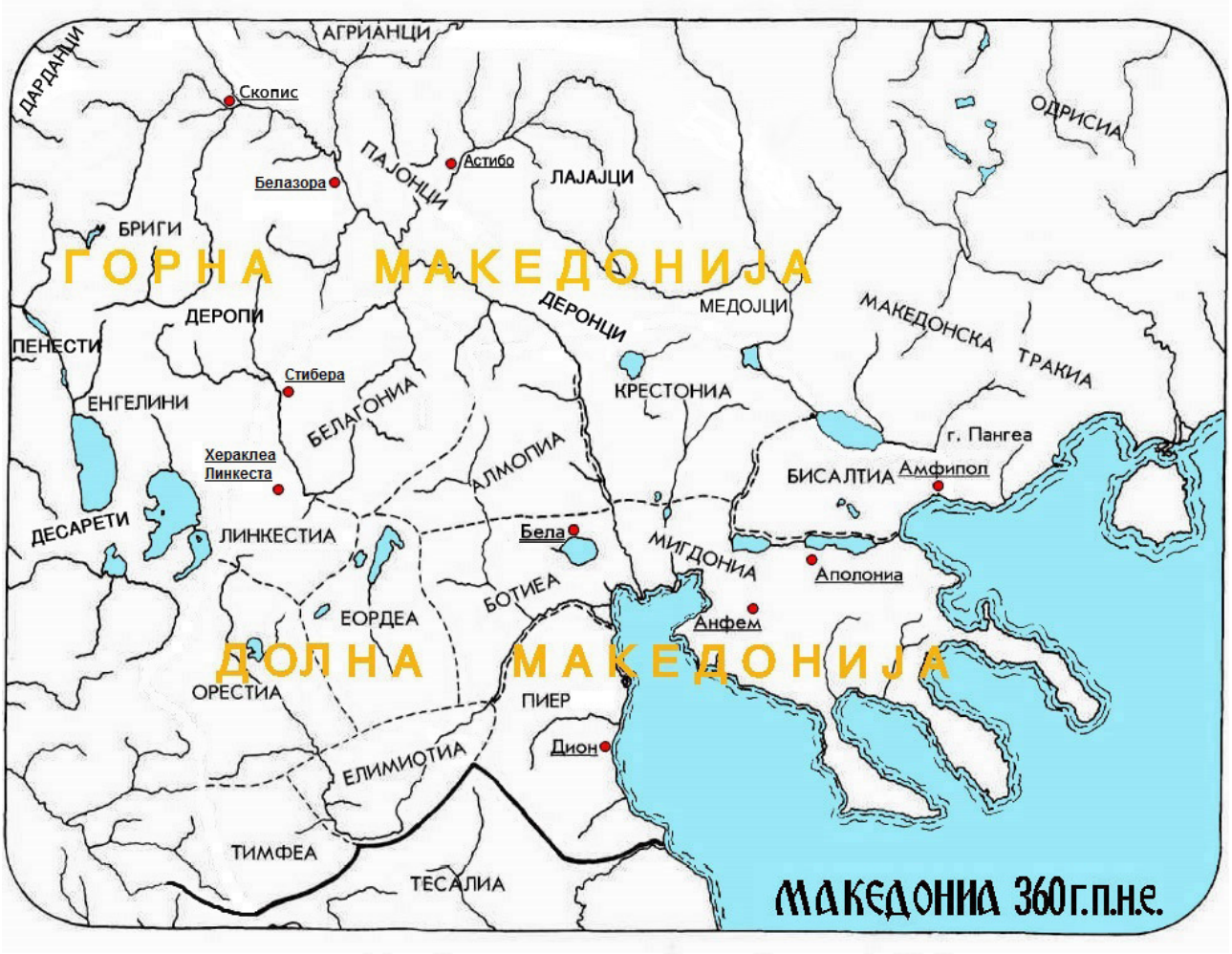
[1] In explaining the official position of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the primacy of christian churches in Eastern and Western parochies, Roman Pope Nicholas I (858-867) in the distant 859 said: "*Roman curia for true churches considers only those which were established by apostles, such as the - Macedonian, Roman, Antiochian and Aleksandrian church. Although the church clerics of Constantinople and Jerusalem call themselves 'patriarchs', however, that's without meaning, because they are not regulated by the apostles*."

[2] Compare Jornandes' "*Sirmis*", *Syc*. In Ravennas the form "*Scupis*" occurs, cf. *Londinis*, *Syc*. *Historia* VII.2 (Bonn ed. p. 272): Tà γàp Zaλδaπà καi Ακυς καi Σκοπiς … etc. „Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum. (Parts I & II)", sir Arthur John Evans. p. 140.



Above: **The territorial distribution of the Macedonian communities and areas in Lower (ДОЛНА) and Upper (ГОРНА) Macedonia in the time of Filip II of Macedon.**

Beside the displacement of large portions of Macedonian population, Romans repeatedly committed divisions of the territories under various provinces, areas and names. Skopje was either in Macedonia or Upper Moesia, or *Dacia Mediterranea* (i.e. "*Dardania*"). Then east Kosovo was separated from Upper Moesia in *Diocese Dacia*, and together with Skopje valley was added to the new province of *Dardania*.

Quote: „*There's in fact, clear historic evidence that, according to the original arrangement of emperor Aurelian, Dardania was tacked on to Dacia Mediterranea, insomuch that in the early lists of the provinces of the Moesian diocese, as given by the M.S. of Verona, Rufus and Polemius Silvius, Dardania and Dacia Mediterranea are given indifferently as name of the one and the same province.*[3] *At some time after the completion of the list of Polemius Silvius and before that of Notitia, the province which bore the double name of Dardania and Dacia Mediterranea was divided into the two provinces of Dardania as we find it in Hierocles, with Scopis as it's Metropolis, and Dacia Mediterranea under Sredec (Serdica). But it is obvious from this that there may have*

[3] Authorial remark: legitimate and logical suspicion arouses on the Latin name „*Dardania*" as diminutive vulgar form (or abbreviation) for *Dacia Mediterranea* (*Dardania/DaciaMediterranea*), or „*Dardania*" as synonym for smaller region of *Dacia Mediterranea*, seen that *Dardania* and *Dacia Mediterranea* are given by different sources indifferently as name of the one and the same province. „Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum. (Parts I & II)", sir Arthur John Evans. p. 139.

been a time when, as the later ecclesiastical arrangement indicates, Skopje was the political and cultural Metropolis of Dacia Mediterranea which included the later separated Dardania.

In the Notitia itself Dardania continues to be reckoned along with Dacia Mediterranea and Ripensis, Moesia Prima, Praevalitana, and a part of Macedonia Salutaris, as one of the "Five Dacias" which had now replaced the "Three Dacias" of original Trans-Danubian province." [4]

Skopje became administrative, cultural, economic and religious center of the entire region. In the year AD 313, following the Edict of Milan, it became the see of the episcopate. The full extent of the Roman colony in *Skupi/Scopis* (or *Scupensis*) is largely unknown, even after significant archaeological excavations. More recent excavations by the Museum of Skopje have uncovered parts of the city wall (much damaged) with two towers (as marked on the map of Pevtinger; lat. *Tabula Peutingeriana*, 4-5 century) and early Roman residential construction from the 2nd and 3rd century. The wall is roughly 12 m high and 3.6 m thick.[5] They also concluded from the identified remains that the outer limit of the urban area was far bigger than suspected. But it is obvious, as indicated by later church documents, that there was a long period of time when Skopje was the central political and christian metropolis in the Roman provinces in Macedonia and the larger area of Balkans, as clearly shown in many different maps that describe the administrative subdivision of the Roman Empire in those times:

Above: **Map of the administrative division of Roman provinces in the Balkans on episcopacies (Dioceses) in the 6th century (AD 535). Justinian I the Great in that moment**

[4] „Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum. (Parts I & II)" by sir Arthur John Evans, p. 139.

[5] http://archaeologica.org.mk/mk/zanimlivost.php?id=2048

institutes *Justiniana Prima* in Skopje, Diocese of Macedonia, as supreme episcopacy that over-ranks all the other Balkan eparchies and episcopacies in order to counter-balance the growing influence of the church of Rome, which spread along the Eastern Adriatic coast (*Dalmatia*) and through northwest reached *Singidunum* (modern *Belgrade*)

Below: **The actual geo-political division of the Roman provinces in the Balkans. Despite the continuous changing and renaming of area after area on several occasions, throughout the centuries they remained generally in the same boundaries as administrative regions under Romeian and later Turkish rule until the 19th century:**

Skopje - Diocese *Justiniana Prima*

Skopje Diocese already existed long before the nomination of *Justiniana Prima* by Justinian I the Great. Skopje bishop is mentioned already in AD 347 as a participant in the church assembly in Sredets (today *Sofia*), then again in AD 379, when it was transformed into Romeian capital during the military campaign against the Visigoths lead by the emperor Theodosius, who resides in *Scopis* (Skopje). Here he dictates an edict (a new law), and mentions the city again in AD 388.[6]

The continued importance of this city as a Romeian military stronghold appears from the *Notitia Imperii*, where the mobile army units from Skopje (lat. *Comitatenses Scupenses*) are mentioned among the reserve units (lat. *Legiones Pseudocomitatenses*) under the command of the *Magister Militum per Illyricum*.[7] It occupied the central juncture of what has always been the main highway of communication between Central and Western Europe and Eastern Rome, the most important ancient route in Macedonia – *Via Axia*, or the „*Axis Road*", which name can be detected from the Latin name for the river Vardar (or *Bardarios*) – *Axios* (i.e. axis, axle). Along its valley goes the

Above: **The sketchy drawing of the 3 main Balkan routes in ancient Roman times**

most ancient corridor that continues further north through the valley of river Morava as northern branch of *Via Egnatia*, and was and still is the chief route between the middle Danubian region and the Aegean Sea (i.e. *Belo More* - „White Sea" in plain Macedonian). Via Axia was connected to Via

[6] Cod. Theod. *De Palatinis* 1.2, dated "*Scopis*". „Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum. (Parts I & II)" by sir Arthur John Evans, p. 128.

[7] „Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum. (Parts I & II)" by sir Arthur John Evans, p. 132.

Egnatia on the South, and passing through *Stobi* (another important center of *Macedonia Seconda*)[8], *Skopis* (Skopje), continues to north into *Moesia*, where it was connected to *Via Diagonalis*[9] and further to river Danube.

„During those times when the Balkans were undivided by ethnic and ideological cleavages, these roads represented the nerve centres of this unity, this ecumene. The anonymous pilgrim who described in AD 333 the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* found organised roads in the Balkans, complete with places where he could rest, refresh himself and change mounts.“ [10]

Up until AD 379, date of a decree by Gratian, civil administrations in Dacia and Macedonia were part of the Western Empire and were only effectively separated from the West during the partition between Valentinian II and Theodosius. Centrality and strategic importance of Skopje Diocese is seen in the letter of bishop John in AD 492 to Pope Gelasius. Quote: „It appears, namely, from the letter addressed in 492 by John, Metropolitan of Scupi, to Pope Gelasius, in his quality as Bishop of the metropolitan city of *Scopinae*: "*Episcopius* (as he styles himself) *Sacrosanctæ* Ecclesiæ *Scopinæ, Metropolitanæ Civitatis*," he claimed a supremacy not only over the Bishops of *Dardania* in its contemporary official sense but over other Bishops who sign beneath him, one of whom was Bonosus, Bishop of no less a place than *Serdica*, the capital of *Dacia Mediterranea*. In view of this fact the letter addressed by Gregory the Great in AD 595 to Felix, Bishop of Sredets (lat. *Serdica*), enjoining him to obey his superior, and the Pope's vicar, Johannes, Bishop of *Justiniana Prima*, acquires a fresh significance. In 553 we find from the Acts of the Fifth Synod of Constantinople that the Bishops of *Naissus* and *Ulpiana* had refused to attend and sided with Pope Vigilius, and when appealed to on the subject refer the synod to their Archbishop Benenatus.“[11]

On the map of Pevtinger (*Tabula Peutingeriana*, 4-5 century) Skopje is marked by the two towers of the city's *Praetorian Gate*, as an important station on the ancient Roman road. These antique 'highways' are fully functional to this day: if traveling by land – one still leads all the way through today's Albania to Drach (*Durrës*), and other through Nish and Belgrade to Illyria (B&H, Croatia and Slovenia) and to present-day Italy. According to the Table, the *Via Egnatia* connected back to the *Via Diagonalis* at a common end point and had no direct links with Constantinopole.

East-Roman emperor Justinian I the Great instaured the Metropolitan Episcopacy *Justiniana Prima* in Skopje in AD 535 of the 6th century, as a central cushion capital, meant to withstand the growing and renewed influence of old Rome and its church.[12] In his law *Novella XI* from April 535, entitled "*De privilegiis archiepiscopi primæ iustinianæ*" (or "*Concerning the rights of the archbishop of Justiniana Prima*"), Justinian honored his birthplace by establishing there an archiepiscopal see, and he defined the status and jurisdiction of the new archbishop. This law constituted an attack against the power of the archbishop of Solun and through him against the Pope in Rome. Emperor describes

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[8] „*DACIA MEDITERRANEA & MACEDONIA SECUNDA IN THE 6th CENTURY: A QUESTION OF INFLUENCE ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE*” by Carolyn S. Snively, p. 219.

[9] *Via Diagonalis* or *Via Militaris* (both names are modern, but the first is more indicative as well as more topographic) was another very important artery connecting the East with the West, leading from Constantinopole through today Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, to Italy and Rome. What has been proven is that the Via Diagonalis from *Carnuntum* on the Austrian Danube was connected directly to the *Amber Road*. „Overland Balkan Routes in the Middle Ages“ by Fabrizio Vanni. Centro Studi Romei of Florence.

[10] „Overland Balkan Routes in the Middle Ages“ by Fabrizio Vanni. Centro Studi Romei of Florence.

[11] „Antiquarian Researches in Illyricum. (Parts I & II)” by sir Arthur John Evans, p. 138.

[12] Skopje flourished under the reign of Justinian I the Great, born Upravda, son of Istok (see Jovan Dragašević , GEOGRAPHY, 1871; p.114), from the nearby village of Taor (*Tauresium*).

it in his *Novela* as part of the province *Dacia Mediterranea* and in *Novella 11 – Macedonia Secunda* was listed among the territories subject to the archbishop of *Justiniana Prima*. The newly inaugurated Archbishop of *Justiniana Prima*, Katelian (lat. *Catelianus*), received ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the provinces of: 1) *Dacia Mediterranea* itself (hence one of the arguments is that *Justiniana Prima* was located in *Dacia Mediterranea*), 2) *Dacia Ripensis*, 3) *Moesia Secunda*, 4) *Dardania* (which was actually a part of *Dacia Mediterranea*), 5) *Praevalitana*, 6) *Macedonia Secunda*, and 7) part of *Pannonia Secunda*, i.e., he acquired ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the *Diocese of Dacia* with minor additions.[13]

It is important to note here, for the sake of argument, the wrong assumption of the Serbian scholars which tend to promote the archaeological site of *Caričin Grad* as the possible location of the *Justinijana Prima*! If, however, construction at *Caričin Grad* began only after *Novella 11* was issued in the year AD 535, it seems quite likely that the city would have been a busy and confusing construction site for at least a decade after 535.[14] Procopius tells us that: „ *…beyond the borders of Epidamnians, very near the castle called Baderiana, is the district named Tauresium, from which the Emperor Justinian, the re-founder of the Roman world, drew his origin. Here the Emperor erected a small quadrangular castle with a tower at each angle, from which it was called "Tetrapyrgia," and near it he built a most glorious City, which he called Justiniana Prima*.“

Episcopacy *Justiniana Prima* generally was the third consecutive autocephalous archiepiscopacy in absolute after the first two: Rome in Italy and the City of Constantine "*New Rome*" (Latin: *Consantinopolitana Nova Roma*), which already, through the centuries passing, gained their recognitions as administrative centers of Eastern and Western church respectively. And like Rome and Nova Roma (Constantinople) was instaured at the spot where there was already previous big city and administrative center. Accordingly Macedonian later became the third Official Liturgical Language after the Septuagint and Latin.[15]

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[13] „*DACIA MEDITERRANEA & MACEDONIA SECUNDA IN THE 6th CENTURY: A QUESTION OF INFLUENCE ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE*” by Carolyn S. Snively, p. 216.

[14] „*DACIA MEDITERRANEA & MACEDONIA SECUNDA IN THE 6th CENTURY: A QUESTION OF INFLUENCE ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE*” by Carolyn S. Snively, p. 218.

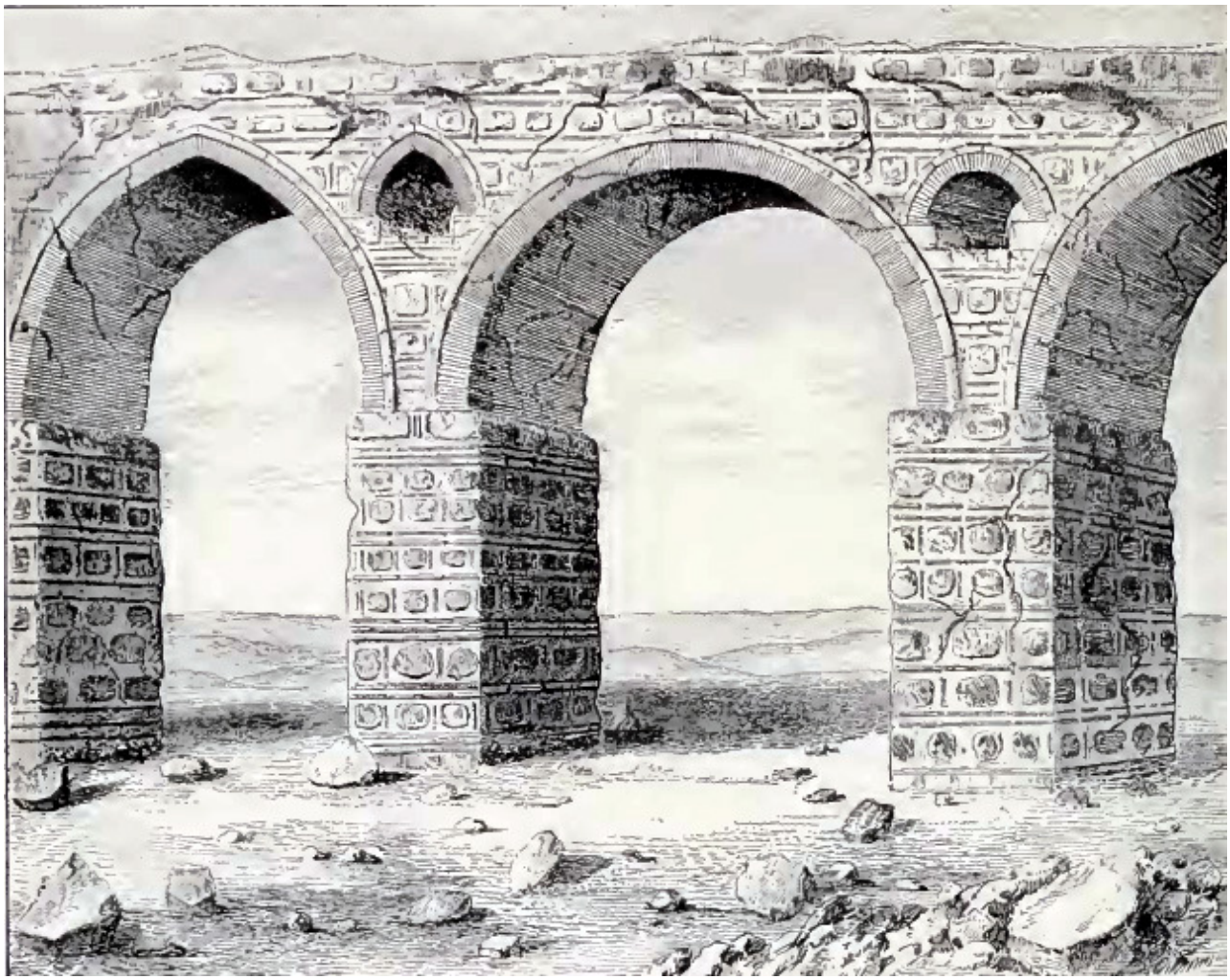
[15] Firstly promoted by Constantinople (*Constantinopolitana Nova Roma*) through the Glagolitic Script, later reformed and modernized in the 9th century by St. Cyril, thereafter renamed by his disciples into *Cyrillic*, it was officially recognized by the Roman Curia and finally proclaimed as the liturgical script and language by the Pontifical legate in AD 863 on the Great Moravia court in Velegrad. With the bull* "*Industriae tuae*", which appointed (St.) Methodius from Macedonia as archbishop of Great Moravia, and allowed him to serve the mass in Macedonic (i.e. *Old Church Slavonic*) language.
* a papal edict.

Ten years later, in AD 545, emperor Justinian ordered the jurisdiction of the church in Skopje to be put under the competence of the *Diocese of Rome*, and the archbishop of *Justiniana Prima* was also promoted into a papal vicar, probably due to the largely Latinized character of the then population in Skopje, but also because the obvious intention of the emperor to put under his direct control the growing influence of the church in Rome. Lets not forget – during the rule of Justinian I the Great, Rome was in a subordinate position, basilicas with a baptisteries were built by him in Ravenna, and as far as the Tharros in Sardinia, and Eastern Roman Empire ruled from Constantinople the entire Mediterranean and Asia Minor. A related issue is that the majority of churches in the province(s) of Macedonia, with a few exceptions earlier and later, were built between AD 460 and the middle of the 6th century.[16] But, old Rome has slowly recovering from the devastations suffered in 410, 455

[16] „*DACIA MEDITERRANEA & MACEDONIA SECUNDA IN THE 6th CENTURY: A QUESTION OF INFLUENCE ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE*" by Carolyn S. Snively, p. 217

and 476,[17] when the last emperor of the West Roman empire, Romulus Augustulus was deposed and city of Rome was repeatedly sacked and destroyed, especially by the Vandals and Visigoths.

Below: **Part of the ancient Roman Aqueduct of Skopje**



Skopje of that time is de facto and de jure the largest city in Macedonia and beyond, with many urban structures scattered all around. Nearby is the village of Taor (*Tauresium*) – the birthplace of Justinian, then there's the old Roman military post "*Tetrapyrgia*" - the watchtower, or so-called "*frurion*" Baderiana, and the big old fortress *Crnche* (today popularly known as "*Marko's Towers*") on the slopes of Mt.Vodno.[18] Beside those there are the ruins of ancient *Scupi*, then the fortress of Kale in the central hill above the downtown Skopje, as well as the ruins of another big fortress, again on the slopes of Mt.Vodno, at the locality called *Sovče*. Wherever there's a construction

[17] In the AD 5th century the ancient Roman empire has finally crumbled, and the last emperor of the West Roman empire, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed. The city of Rome was repeatedly sacked and destroyed, especially by the Vandals, Visigoths and Franks. Italy was retaken from the barbarians under the rule of Justinian I the Great in AD 554, when the last Franks were defeated in the battle of *Casilinum*, North Italy.

[18] The Old Skopje acropolis was destroyed in the catastrophic earthquake in AD 518. And it is from this period that the city migrated from its old site to the new. The old position of Skopje with its broad plain reflected the characteristics of the ancient civilized age, when the cities were built in the flatlands. But the character of the times has changed drastically. As the Mongolian invasions followed, the age of medieval castle building had begun and strong natural positions, the peak and the promontory, were sought for civic foundation.

works – some old structure, old walls, basilicas, etc. sprung from underground. Many of these structures were destroyed due to two catastrophic earthquakes that hit the city of Skopje: one back in AD 518, and another in 1963.

After the inauguration of Katelian as the first Archbishop of *Justiniana Prima*, in line of succession followed the Archbishops Benenat of Skopje (lat. *Benenatus Scupensis*) in AD 553, Jovan I (lat. *Johanes*) in AD 591-602 as reported by J. Zellier[19], until the Jovan IX, which is noted as participant at the Third Council of Constantinopolitana Nova Roma in AD 680.

Under jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Bishop of Skopje Diocese (i.e. *Justiniana Prima*) in different times or all together were the: episcopacy of *Nish* (*Naisus*), episcopacy of *Sredets* (today *Sofia*) – at one time the capital of the Roman province of *Dacia Mediterranea*; episcopacy *Ulpiana* (*Justiniana Seconda* on Kosovo Pole), episcopacy of *Ratiaeria Danubiana*, episcopacy of *Bitola* (lat. *Episcopia Bouteleos*), *Solun's Diocese* of Aegean Macedonia (*Macedonia Seconda*), and episcopacy of *Kutmichevica* (*Praevalitana Bishopric*, present-day central Albania). So, Metropolitan bishops in Skopje covered the area from the Adriatic coast on the West - to the Mt. Haemus (Mkd. Stara Planina) on the East, and North from the Danube - to the south in Thessaly.

Skopje Diocese *Justiniana Prima* due to assimilation, separatism and discrepancies of the various eparchies that once belonged to her, the fall of the emperor Maurice (that had been killed in 602, following a mutiny among the Danube forces), and under the pressure of the Mongolian and other barbaric invasions from the north, in the same year, AD 602, retreated to Ohrid and became known as *Ohrid Archiepiscopacy*. Quien and Farlati, for example, identify *Justiniana Prima* with Ohrid (lat. *Lychnidos*) and *New Epirus*.[20] The last structures of the church organization from the (old) *Justiniana Prima* in northern Balkans vanished after 614.[21] But even if heavily diminished in eparchies and cornered in Ohrid, it still continued to be the only reliable great see of christianity in Macedonia and the rest of the Balkans. We can see that from the Bulgarian proper, where the official liturgical language of the Bulgar Archiepiscopate remained the language of the Romeians from Constantinople until AD 893, when it was replaced with the Macedonic liturgical language and reformed *Glagolitic Script* that was used by Ohrid Archiepiscopate. This modified Glagolitic Script, later renamed "*Cyrillic*" by the St. Klement disciples, soonafter reached the Kievan Russia' where became the official script too, and from there spread across other areas in East Europe, Asia and Africa (see Coptic).

During the reign of Tsar Samoil (969-1018) Ohrid Archiepiscopacy recovered again and became more influential, due to the renewed relationship with the Roman papal state, and also because of the Bogomils[22], which became the constituent part of Samoil's state church on the territory of Macedonia. But the growing and renewed power and independence of the Macedonian Rightfaithful church under Samoil rule was cruelly suppressed by the Romeian Emperor Basil II (he too born

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[19] "Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l'Empire Romain" by Jacques Zeiller, 1967.

[20] "Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l'Empire Romain" by Jacques Zeiller, 1967, p.385 footnote: "Oriens christianus" vol.II p.281.

[21] "The Church in the Final Period of the Late Roman Danubian Provinces" by Alexandru Madgearu, 2010.

[22] The first actual Protestant church in Europe. Severely oppressed and persecuted, as equaly condemned and excommunicated by both Eastern-Rightfaithful and Western-Catholic church. See: THE MACEDONIAN GENIUS THROUGH THE CENTURIES by Giorgio Nurigiani.1972, pp. 64,67,68. Also: The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism" by Dimitri Obolensky. 1948, pp.151,259: "*From the combined evidence of geografical factors, of indirect historical data and of later sources, which must now be examined, it is possible to prove that the cradle and subsequent stronghold of Bogomilism in the Balkans was Macedonia*."

Macedonian from Adrianople), who destroyed Samoil's empire, and put once again the Macedonian church with all its eparchies under the control of Konstantinopol (lat. *Constantinopolitana Nova Roma*), but with almost total independence.

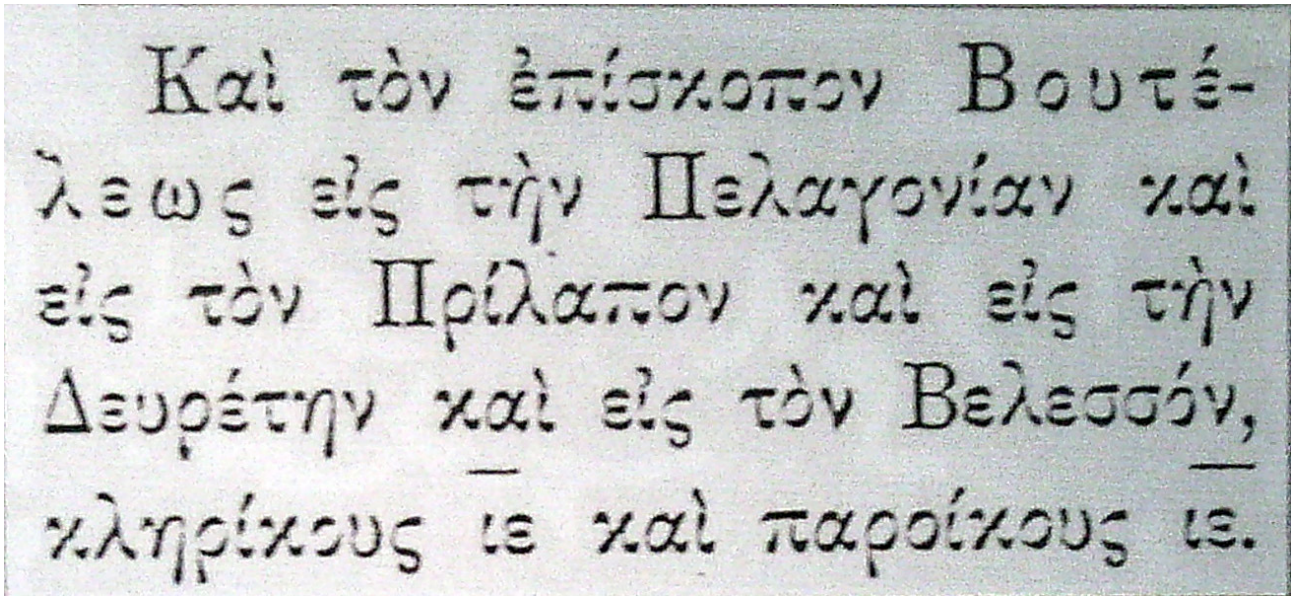
After the collapse of Samoil's Macedonian state the Archiepiscopacy of Ohrid passed under Basil's rule in the year of 1018, and the emperor Basil II issued three bills to this end, confirming to the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy the ecclesiastical provinces, thirty-two in all, including:

1. Ohrid-Prespa eparchy (Archiepiscopacy);
2. Kostur eparchy;
3. Vutron eparchy in southern Arbania;
4. Iraklis (*Bitola*) eparchy with Pelagonia, Prilep, Veles and Debar;
5. Meglenska eparchy;
6. Strumitsa eparchy with Radoviš;
7. Morodvis eparchy with Maleševo;
8. Velbužd (today *Kyustendil*) eparchy;
9. Sredec (today *Sofia*) eparchy;
10. Niš (lat. *Naisus*) eparchy;
11. Branichevo eparchy along the Morava valley with Smederevo;
12. Belgrade (lat. *Singidunum*) eparchy;
13. Srem (lat. *Sirmium*) eparchy;
14. Skopje (lat. *Scupensis/Scupi*) eparchy;
15. Prizren eparchy;
16. Lipljan eparchy (lat. *Ulpiana*, i.e. *Justiniana Seconda*) with Kosovo Pole;
17. Ras (*Raška*) eparchy;
18. Belgrade (today *Berat* in Albania) eparchy in *Nova Epirus*;
19. Vidin eparchy;
20. Kozil eparchy;
21. Orosh eparchy west of Prizren;
22. Drinopole eparchy in Arbania near Argirocastro;
23. Imer eparchy in Arbania north of Corfu;
24. Glavenitsa eparchy with Devol and Kutmichevitsa;
25. Janina (*Ioanina*) eparchy in Epirus;
26. Stash eparchy in Thessalia
27. Vels eparchy south of Drinopole;
28. Serbitsa eparchy southwest of Solun (*Thessalonika*);
29. Ber eparchy west of Solun (*Thessalonika*);;
30. Bregalnitsa eparchy in Štip (lat. *Astibo*);
31. Chernitsa eparchy with *Dyrrachium* (today *Dürres*), with the last episcope of Durrës under the auspices of Ohrid Archdiocese mentioned in the year 1280; and finally
32. T'rnovo eparchy in what is now Bulgaria.

Above: **The Ohrid Patriarchate with its eparchies in AD 1020**

The archiepiscopal see in Ohrid retained its independence, and was subordinate only to the emperor Basil himself, who kept the exclusive right to designate or appoint the Archbishop (from the list of three candidates submitted by the Ohrid synod). For different periods before, during, and after Samoil's rule, the see of Ohrid Archiepiscopacy was situated in the city of Prilep as well.

Next page: **Excerpt from the *Chrisovula* of the East-Roman emperor Basil II (born in Macedonia) from 1019, with quote: "*To the episcope of Bitola and of Pelagonia and to the Prilep and to the Devretia and to the Veles, cleric of which parochies he is.*" Museum of the City of Bitola**


Καὶ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον Βουτέ-
λεως εἰς τὴν Πελαγονίαν καὶ
εἰς τὸν Πρίλαπον καὶ εἰς τὴν
Δευρέτην καὶ εἰς τὸν Βελεσσόν,
κληρίκους ιε καὶ παροίκους ιε.

The next big blow to the Macedonian Rightfaithful Church and Ohrid Archdiocese, in accordance with the animosity and with blessing of the Roman-catholic church, came in the form of Osmanly-Turks invasion in the 14th century. Vatican constantly growing power succeeded to enlarge his influence in Macedonia throughout the collaboration with these foreign invaders from the east, and by sending more and more of his missionaries in order to convert the church believers of the Macedonic rite into Roman-catholic credo. Thus it is known that in Archiepiscopacy of Skopje Justiniana Prima of 17th century they even succeeded to install their archbishop, of Macedonian origin - Andrea Bogdan (1600-1683), who was then after substituted by his nephew Petar Bogdan in 1677.

After the Osmanly-Turks invasion in following centuries many churches were lost, burned or transformed in mosques. For example the Skopje Holy Mountain (Mkd. *Skopska Sveta Gora*) near Skopje was even renamed into *Skopje' Montenegro* (Mkd. *Skopska Crna Gora*) due to the constant Turkish raids on the numerous churches and monasteries that were put ablaze together with the villages and forest. For long periods the mountain was torched-black, hence renamed *Montenegro* (Black-mountain).

Nevertheless, despite all the calamities and misfortunes, city of Skopje kept its title of Episcopal See and Metropolitan Archbishopric for 1379 years, until 1914, when it fell under Serbian occupation.[23] The new Orthodox Serbian kingdom, in secret accordance with the Roman-catholic church, "succeeded" in dispossessing the Skopje Diocese of its privileged status on the benefit of the new Serbian capital-city Belgrade. With a treachery concordat stipulated with the Roman-catholic church, which by the way has no legal or canonical authority whatsoever over the orthodox curches[24], pope Pius X, uncanonically and illegally, by simple switching the words - reclassified the dependent and subordinate bishopric of Belgrade into "*Archbishopric*" and lowered the Archbishopric title of Skopje into *Bishopric*, inverting the 1379-years old tradition and history with simple and illegal piece of paper. The treachery wrongdoing of the new Serbian church (SPC) and her century-long quarrel with the Macedonian Church (MPC-OA) lasts until nowadays.

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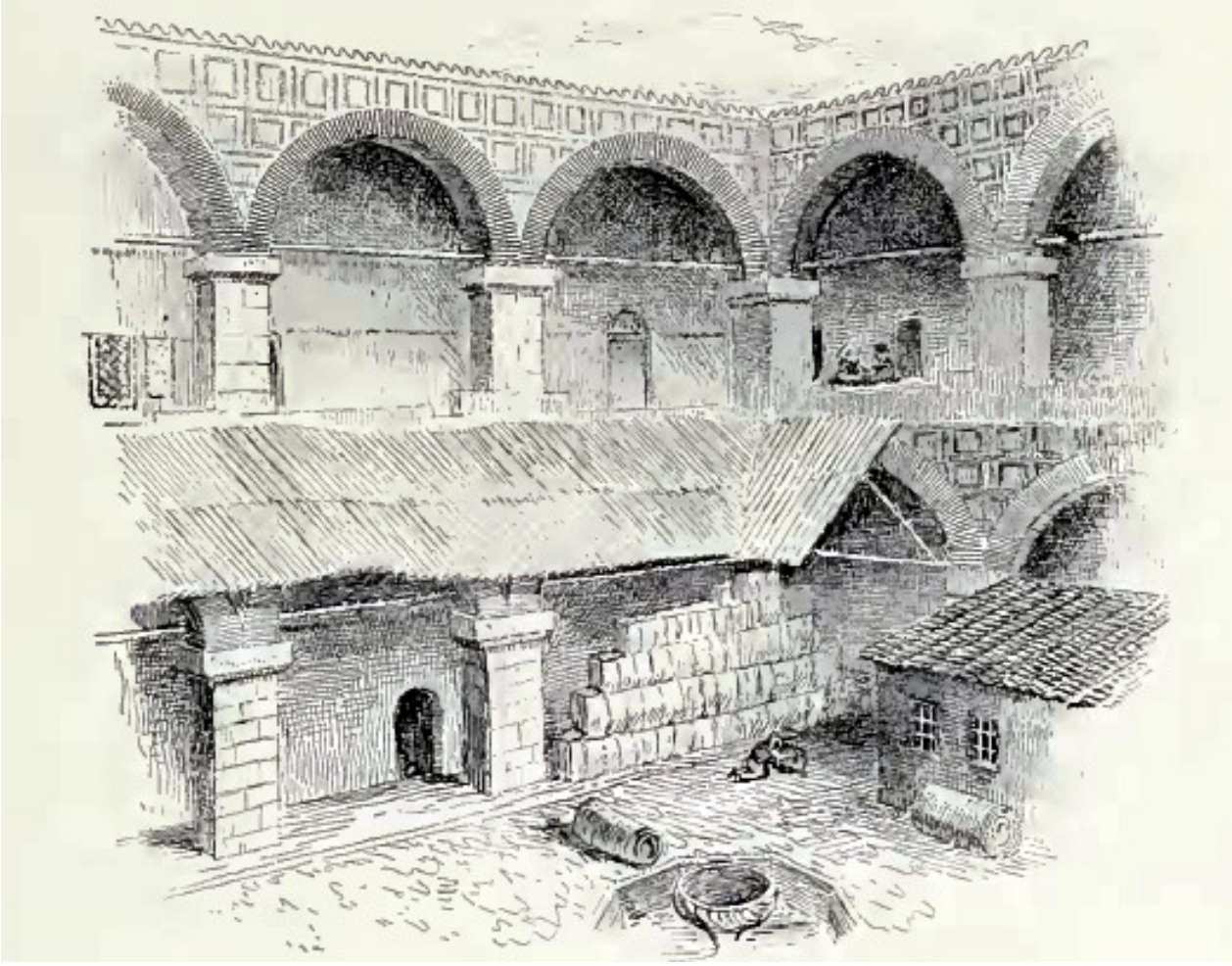
[23] See the Vatican-Serbian Concordat of 24 June 1914:

[24] "Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces Danubiennes de l'Empire Romain by Jacques Zeiller, 1967, p.385.

Succeeding of the historical events throughout the centuries had left deep traces and far-reaching consequences on Skopje/Justiniana Prima and Ohrid Archiepiscopacy. Metropolitan Episcopal city of Skopje as Macedonian Christian center gradually lost its former position and importance. Along with it from the historic scene disappeared also the *Justiniana Prima*, which, according to recorded data of many sources, and relatively recent researches committed by the renowned English archaeologist sir Arthur J. Evans – is still buried under the old town (Turkish Bazaar) in the center of Skopje.

Above: **The Macedonian National Theatre (in front) and Kale Fortress before the 1963 earthquake**

Next page: ***Kurshumli-An*, ancient Romeian (East-Roman) structure that miraculously survived until our days, readapted as a small bazaar (Turk. *An*). It can be still observed and visited in downtown Skopje**



- From the synod records of the Ohrid Archbishopric: "*Ivan Ierakar, by birth Macedonian*" – a man living in the Ohrid region introduces himself as Macedonian; beginning of the 13th century. In 1891 cardinal J. Pitra published a collection of documents, 155 in number, which refer to the Ohrid Church during the time of archbishop Demetrius Homatian (1216-1235). It is established from these records that in this period in Macedonia the majority of the population consisted of Macedonians.[25] The extract given here is from the document number 72. Ivan Ierakar was from the village of *Vlasto* (now Velesto), in the Ohrid region (See Ivan Sneragov "History of the Ohrid Archiepiscopacy I", p. 250). Beside this village in the Ohrid region, he has picked out villages with Macedonic names in the records of the archbishopric. *Ela* (now *Elšani*), *Ezerjani* and *Robi*, as well as the first names *Bratan*, *Radov*, *Grida*, *Draža*, *Dragomad*, *Sarakin*, *Dobre*, *Velkan* and others.[26] To the *Genos Elkon ed Makedonon* - this name for the population of Macedonia, according to D. Angelov, was

[25] J. Pitra, "*Analecta sacra et classica specilegio Solesmensi parta, t. VI Juris ecclesiastici graecorum selecta paralipomena*". Parissis et Romae 1891, col. 315.

[26] D.Angelov, „Prinos Към Narodnostite i Pozemleni Otnoshenja vo Makedonija" p.120.

"*due to their territorial appurtenance*".[27] With reference to the different naming of the separate peoples within the borders of Romeian empire.[28]

Angelov has arrived to the conclusion on the basis of his studies of the synod records to determine the nationality of the subjects in the diocese of Epirus. Namely, he notes that "*the second national population element in importance and numbers* (after the '*Vlachs*', i.e. latinized-orthodox Macedonic population) *within the borders of the Epirus Diocese in that period were the Macedonians, of whom there is frequent mention in the records of the archbishopric* (over 50 times)*, i.e. the „Macedonians" formed the basic majority of the population*".[29]

[27] D.Angelov, „Prinos Към Narodnostite i Pozemleni Otnoshenja vo Makedonija" p.12.

[28] G. G. Litavrin „Vizantinsko Obshestvo i Gosudarstvo" Vol. X-XI BB. Moscow, 1977, p.156 et seq.; „Documents on the Struggle of the Macedonian People for Independence and a Nation-State", Vol. I pp. 129, 130, The University of "SS. Cyril and Methodius".

[29] D. Angelov, „Prinos Към Narodnostite i Pozemleni Otnoshenja vo Makedonija" pp. 11-12 et. seq. 43.